

MEETING SUMMARY

North Carolina National Park, Parkway and Forests Development Council

March 6, 2009

1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

US Forest Service Wayah Ranger District Office

Nantahala National Forest, Franklin NC

Council Members in Attendance: Maxine Dalton, Claude Douthit, Tom Massie

Agency Members in Attendance: Mary Noel/USFS, Alice Cohen/USFS, Tom Jackson/State Parks, Kevin Fitzgerald/GSMNP

I. Call to Order – Maxine Dalton called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm

II. Approval of Summary from January 9, 2008. None present had any changes to make to the summary notes. In the absence of a quorum, no vote was taken.

Maxine asked Agency representatives if they objected to an early on line review of meeting notes so that they might be distributed to interested parties while the information is still timely. There were no objections. Council members will be polled by e mail.

III. Council Members Report: Maxine Dalton reported on meetings with Rep. Ray Rapp; Phil Ricker of the Madison County TDA; Larry Burda of the Visitors Center; Steve Garrison, County Manager; and the Madison County PB where she distributed copies of the publication, Forests on the Edge and asked PB members to consider the issues outlined in this report when developing the comprehensive plan. Maxine expressed the hope that all council members will work to make these contacts and seek opportunities to share information with members of the communities we represent.

Claude Douthit reported on his meetings with a reporter from the Smoky Mountain Express about the 75th Anniversary of the GSMNP and a meeting with the Swain County School Coordinator about the history of the GSMNP in Swain County. IV.

IV. Agency Reports:

Tom Massie reported that the governor has pulled back \$100 M from CWMTF as a cash flow measure until more information becomes available following April 15th tax revenue analysis. The General Assembly will be addressing all Trust Fund \$ in preparation for the biennial budget. The CWMTF has received the largest number of applications for funding in its history and Western NC is well represented in this pool. Tom expressed appreciation for the Council's letter of support on behalf of his agency.

Tom Jackson reported that State Parks has had \$2.3 million revert to the General Fund and the Parks have been asked to identify an additional \$1.5 million. Seasonal hires have been frozen. On a more optimistic note, the Grandfather Mountain purchase is still

moving through the legislature. Tom expressed appreciation on behalf of Lewis Ledford for the Council's letter of support. He also distributed a current newsletter and brochure.

Kevin Fitzgerald reported that an economic analysis has determined that \$700 M in revenue and 14, 000 jobs are created in counties adjacent to the GSMNP. He also submitted the following report. Note that there was some concern expressed by Mr. Douthit about the bands that would be chosen to play at the Sept. 2nd Park Rededication. Kevin responded on the difficulty of making these kinds of decisions without hurting feelings. Kevin provided those in attendance with a handout describing the latest anniversary event planning. Also included was an update concerning the North Shore Road settlement and the park service has provided briefing documents for the new administration's staff. No budget appropriation has been successfully obtained so far. Stimulus funding from the Recovery Act will be coming to the park for a variety of projects and we will get more specific information on that issue soon. Park visitation in 2008 dropped approximately 3.5% with significant visitor reductions at all three main entrances.

Mary Noel updated the Council from the US Forest Service and provided them with a handout describing the following activities: The Upper Tellico OHV Area environmental assessment has been released and the preferred alternative is to permanently close the area to OHV. The reason for this preferred action is the difficulty in repairing and maintaining the landscape and meet water quality standards. A decision concerning recreational boating on the Chattooga River will be released soon. Economic stimulus money should be coming to the forest through the Recovery Act and potential projects include refurbishment of maintenance facilities, roads, and trails. More specific information will be available soon – and the work will be done primarily through contracts with outside entities. Various planning and research continues concerning restoration sites, hemlock wooly adelgid control effectiveness, and chestnut reintroduction efforts. The American Chestnut Foundation has located their national office in Asheville at the forest headquarters building. The US Forest Service is partnering with the NC Division of Forest Resources to complete a Statewide Forest Resource Assessment by June 2010. The assessment will describe and define forested areas throughout the state and include a significant public participation component.

V. The decision to approve Bob McCollum as an ex officio member will be taken up in May.

VI. Council members will be polled by e mail regarding a letter to Secretary Salazar about the North Shore Settlement which will be sent on March 10th if there are no objections.

VIII. Prioritization of Council Goals and Objectives will be placed on the agenda for July when new Council members are on board.

IX. Meeting adjourned at 2:30 PM